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Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the sixty-third session

Observer status for the International Olympic Committee in the General Assembly

Letter dated 26 November 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward the attached letter addressed to you by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Franco Frattini, concerning the request for observer status for the International Olympic Committee in the General Assembly (see enclosure).

Pursuant to rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have the honour to request the inclusion of an item entitled "Observer status for the International Olympic Committee in the General Assembly" in the agenda of the sixty-third session.

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum on the nature and description of the International Olympic Committee (see annex I) and the relevant draft resolution (see annex II) are also attached.

I have the honour to further request that the present letter and its annexes be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Aldo **Mantovani**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Enclosure

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) was founded in 1894 with the purpose of placing sport at the service of humankind and with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity. It espouses a philosophy of human development and healthy lifestyles by blending sport with culture and education. Its Founding Fathers were inspired by the Olympic Games of Greek antiquity, whose primary concern was athletic competition between city states in condition of peace.

The IOC is a non-profit international organization with a membership that spans the entire globe. The Olympic Movement is a conglomeration of 205 National Olympic Committees; the International Federations that govern individual sports, such as FIFA and the International Association of Athletics Federations; the countries organizing the Olympic Games; the five Olympic continental associations; and the millions of sportspersons around the world whose interests constitute a fundamental element of its very existence and actions.

The IOC has signed memorandums of understanding with 15 United Nations specialized agencies and programmes, the oldest being the memorandum of understanding signed in 1922 between IOC and the International Labour Organization, and cooperates with another 10 of them. The activities that IOC has undertaken in support of United Nations specialized agencies have been aimed particularly at human development, humanitarian relief and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In the light of the above, I believe it would be of particular importance if the United Nations could grant IOC observer status in the General Assembly. Sport is an important tool for development and peace, and IOC can support the United Nations in pursing its mandate.

(*Signed*) Franco **Frattini**

Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

1. Historical background

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) was founded in 1894 with the purpose of placing sport at the service of humankind with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity. It espouses a philosophy of human development and healthy lifestyles by blending sport with culture and education. Its Founding Fathers were inspired by the Olympic Games of Greek antiquity, whose primary concern was athletic competition between city states in conditions of peace.

The Olympic Movement is a conglomeration of 205 National Olympic Committees; the International Federations which govern individual sports, such as FIFA and the International Association of Athletics Federations; the countries organizing the Olympic Games; the five Olympic continental associations; and the millions of sportspersons around the world whose interests constitute a fundamental element of its very existence and actions.

2. Symbols and motto

The symbols of the IOC are the five interlaced rings in the primary colors that are found in all the flags of the UN member states, representing the union of the five continents and the meeting of athletes from throughout the world at the Olympic Games; the motto "Citius – Altius – Fortius" (Faster Higher Stronger) expressing the aspirations of the Olympic Movement; and the Olympic Anthem.

3. The Olympic Games

The IOC organizes the Games of the Olympiad (Olympic Summer Games) and the Olympic Winter Games. Starting in 2010, the IOC will introduce the Youth Olympic Games for summer and winter sports, the main purpose of which is to combat sedentarity by encouraging young people to participate in physical activity.

4. Membership

The IOC is composed of a maximum of 115 members. They meet in Session (general assembly) at least once a year. The IOC President is elected by the IOC members by secret ballot for an initial term of eight years. The President presides over all activities of the IOC, acting as its permanent representative. The current President, since 16 July 2001, is Jacques Rogge, of Belgium.

5. Organizational structure

Universality is at the heart of the IOC membership structure. All IOC members are volunteers, and they bring their unique expertise to the management of the IOC, spanning sectors as diverse as sport, economics, science, media and politics, and geographical distribution. The majority of the members have participated in the Games as athletes, or have been active athletes or sports officials.

The Executive Board meets quarterly to manage the affairs of the IOC. It is currently composed of the IOC President, four Vice-Presidents and 10 other members, including an

athlete representative, all elected by the Session by Secret ballot, by a majority of votes cast, for a four-year term.

In addition, IOC commissions, established by the President, study specialized subjects and make recommendations to the Executive Board. Commissions include IOC members, representatives of the International Sports Federations, National Olympic Committees, athletes, technical experts, advisers and sports specialists and individuals of high standing in society or their professions.

Together, the IOC Sessions, Executive Board and commissions define the strategic decisions that are implemented by the IOC administration.

The IOC administration is placed under the responsibility of a Director General, who runs general affairs under the authority and guidance of the President. He is assisted in this task by departmental directors. The IOC administration is currently made up of about 450 staff representing 38 nationalities. It has been headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland, since 1915.

6. Association with the United Nations

Since 1993, in nine different sessions, the United Nations General Assembly has deliberated and adopted a resolution entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal," thus supporting the IOC and Olympic Movement in its endeavors to contribute to the UN's mission to promote mutual understanding, solidarity, and peaceful dialogue among communities. The resolutions are an acknowledgement of the critical role that sport can play and is playing in the development of society. These resolutions are as follows:

- Resolution A 48/L9 in October 1993
- Resolution 50/13 in November 1995
- Resolution 52/21 in November 1997
- Resolution 54/34 in November 1999
- Resolution 56/75 in December 2001
- Resolution 58/6 in November 2003
- Resolution 60/8 in December 2005
- Resolution 62/4 in October 2007

The General Assembly has also passed a number of resolutions entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, peace and development," namely:

- Resolution A/RES/58/5 in November 2003
- Resolution A/RES/59/10 in October 2004
- Resolution A/RES/61/10 in November 2006
- Resolution A/RES/62/271 in July 2008

The resolutions have, *inter alia* called upon Member States to cooperate with the IOC and all concerned agencies and programmes of the United Nations to implement projects using sport as a tool for peace building and human development, and have supported the IOC and the Olympic Movement in their work to generate mutual understanding, solidarity, and peaceful dialogue among communities through the symbolic but powerful call for an observance of the Olympic Truce during each edition of the Olympic Games.

Recognition of the added value of sport to achieve the objectives of the United Nations was further acknowledged with the proclamation by the General Assembly that 1995 be celebrated as the International Year of Sport and the Olympic Idea and 2005 as the International Year of Sport for Development and Peace.

7. Activities with UN peace-keeping missions

In May 2006, the UN Secretary-General formalized the working relationship that had already developed between the IOC and some UN peacekeeping missions on the ground. He requested UN peacekeeping missions around the world to seriously consider applying sport to their work as they tried to rebuild confidence between parties coming out of conflict.

The IOC has successfully worked in Liberia with UNMIL, in DR Congo with MONUC and in Haiti with MINUSTAH through the country's sporting community. The IOC is developing programmes in Côte d'Ivoire with ONUCI and the Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace to the UN Secretary-General. These programmes are meant to encourage communities, particularly young people, to interact, build confidence and encourage a spirit of cooperation and friendship.

The flag of the United Nations also flies at the Olympic Games.

8. Relations with UN agencies

The IOC has signed memorandums of understanding (MoU) with 15 UN specialized agencies and programmes, the oldest being the MoU signed in 1922 between the IOC and the International Labour Organization, and cooperates with another 10 of them. The activities that the IOC has undertaken in support of UN specialized agencies have been aimed particularly at human development, humanitarian relief and the achievement of the MDGs such as:

i. **UNDP** – The two have teamed up to encourage governments to place sport at the center of development, mobilize communities for peace and use sport to unite their peoples. The IOC and UNDP organized a unique forum which brought together Resident Representatives, sports leaders and governments to discuss the contribution of sport to development and nation-building. The agency has continued to participate in the organization of the Olympic Games by contributing to human-related programmes, training and environmental care.

ii. **ILO** – Poverty alleviation through local economic development activities and women's empowerment around sport have been the major focus of the IOC-ILO partnership over the years.

iii. **UNICEF** – Since 1996, the IOC and UNICEF have striven to place their networks at the service of children and youth development, using basic physical and relational activities to address issues related to their empowerment, health conditions and living standards. From HIV prevention to girls' education and leadership, joint initiatives have reached out to thousands of women and children, in particular from disadvantaged communities. In the framework of the Olympic Games, the IOC has encouraged its partner organizations to provide resources to the agency and engage it to educate young people during the Games. The "Champions for Children's Rights" during the 2004 Athens Olympic Youth Camp was a particularly innovative collaboration.

iv. **UNAIDS** – The IOC and UNAIDS have collaborated in a global educational programme that targets young people. The joint advocacy publication, which has a special appeal to young people, has been published in English, French, Mandarin, Russian, Portuguese and Swahili. Versions in other languages have been planned for the future. The IOC commits resources to its joint advocacy programmes, using sport as a vehicle to carry the message. At the Olympic Games and in between, high profile sportspersons from across the globe lend their images, time and resources to participate in these programmes.

v. **UNESCO** – The Olympic Movement works hand-in-hand with UNESCO in areas such as education, gender equality, culture and anti-doping education. The World Anti-Doping Agency was inspired by the IOC to combat the scourge of doping in sport. The international anti-doping convention has been ratified by the necessary number of UN member countries at the behest of UNESCO.

vi. **UNEP** – The environment is a major element of the organization of the Olympic Games. UNEP is the partner of choice in environmental matters when the IOC and Olympic Games host countries organize the Games. This partnership has now been extended to include a world-wide educational programme for young people exploiting the convening power of sport. The Secretary General's report alludes to the just-ended confidence-building sports project in Kenya which was organized under the auspices of UNEP. The IOC was fully a part of that project, mobilizing sports organizations to participate and providing resources.

vii. **WHO** – The health of sportspersons is paramount at all times. The IOC has always benefited from WHO advice on health matters, and to design and maintain smoke-free Games. The IOC and WHO work together to encourage the general public to participate in physical activity, and to organize the hugely successful Sport for All World Congress, whose aim is to encourage the general public to adopt healthy lifestyles.

viii. **WFP** – The IOC has started an alliance with the WFP by contributing financial resources to a feeding programme for children and supporting its projects in four countries in Africa and the Middle East. The IOC has also supported the WFP's world-wide Walk the World: Fight Hunger campaign by actively encouraging sportspersons to participate. And not for the first time, the IOC has managed to capitalize on its partnership with this organizations in war-torn Somalia to provide them with sports equipment and other resources for young people in that country.

ix. **UNHCR** – The long-standing cooperation has resulted in the Olympic Movement providing both sporting and humanitarian assistance to the agency for refugees and displaced persons on three continents. The IOC's "Giving is Winning" campaign, in which all sportspersons, National Olympic Committees and sports officials are requested to donate items of clothing, has been a great success. In 2004, the project collected eight 40-foot container loads of clothing. In the lead-up to and during the Games in Beijing, the project collected 17 containers for donation to the UNHCR. The IOC has supported educational and leisure programmes in refugee camps, providing material and financial resources. The IOC is supporting the UNHCR's project to use sport to address sexual and gender-based violence in refugee camps.

9. Activities with governments and governmental organizations

The IOC has worked with the European Union and African Union to adequately position sport as a factor in the lives of people, as an important socio-economic activity and a contributor to the health, well-being and happiness of people. The IOC supports talent identification and sports development programmes around the world, particularly making available financial resources for such developments to countries that need them the most.

The IOC, through the National Olympic Committees, works with governments to send talented youngsters to school in their own countries, and those with real potential are afforded opportunities to follow courses of their choice at appropriate universities while at the same time pursuing their sporting dreams.

10. Activities with their organizations

The IOC works with some of the world's leading organizations in the service of society. It has collaborated with the Red Cross Movement in the clearance of landmines. And training people who have been maimed by war and landmine victims. The IOC has contributed to funds for victims of natural disasters such as earthquakes and the tsunami.

11. Reasons for seeking observer status for the International Olympic Committee

a. The IOC is the largest youth-based sports organization. Sport influences young people in particular and the world's community in general. Sport has great influence on the socio-economic lives of people. The Olympic Movement reaches every facet of society.

b. The IOC and its partner sports organizations have worked with the UN, governments and the international community at large in ensuring that sport has transformed the lives of millions of people, especially young citizens across the globe, delivering education and services to the vulnerable, supporting environmental campaigns and providing a vehicle for the UN peacekeeping missions.

c. The cornerstone of the IOC's social responsibility is to provide the necessary support to the UN for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The IOC has since identified six of the MDGs as areas through which the contribution of sport could make the most impact, and has been active in providing support through national programmes of some member states or through UN agencies. These are:

- **MDG No. 1: Eradicate extreme poverty** – The IOC's programme for sports development at grassroots level is linked to poverty eradication. It has supported, with resources, the construction of basic infrastructure in developing countries whose purpose is to use sport to develop the skills of young people and women in economically marginalized areas. Many UN agencies and the private sector are partners in this project. The IOC has also launched an infrastructure development pilot project for developing countries. These facilities are meant to use sport to attract young people and the community at large to educational programmes, community development projects, health care and dialogue.

- **MDG No. 2: Achieve universal primary education** – The IOC has supported school programmes at all levels, providing resources for children to go to, and stay at school. In partnership with various organizations, the IOC has provided resources for children caught in conflict to be educated, and has provided material support through UN agencies for young people in refugee camps to gain primary education. A back- to- school project with some governments, National Olympic committees and the private sector has seen the return to school of thousands of primary school children in parts of Africa. The IOC has also provided resources for the construction and repair of classrooms, and is currently working with a UN agency to provide libraries in a number of countries through sports organizations.

- **MDG No. 3: Promote gender equality and promote women** – the IOC has a special Commission that deals with this issue and has made it a priority. Every four years, it organizes a special world forum that deals with the promotion of women in all areas of society through sport. The IOC also provides resources for the promotion of gender equality, and these resources are not reserved only for the sporting community. Special educational programmes have been designed by external experts and are offered to women so that they can be competitive. The IOC works with several UN agencies in this respect, and it has adopted International Women's Day to celebrate the contribution of women world-wide to the development of society, especially in the promotion of women and girls, for which special

prizes are awarded. Recent recipients have included a minister, a prime minister and a first lady.

- **MDG No. 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases** – Such has been the concern of the IOC faced with the spread of the pandemic that it has launched a special programme to educate young people in particular, using sport to reach them. Working with UN agencies, governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations and the Red Cross Movement, the IOC has galvanized the participation of young people in this process in Africa, Asia and Oceania. It has used the powerful symbol of the Olympic Torch relay to bring the attention of young people to the pandemic. The IOC has also encouraged UN agencies to use the educational publication "Together for HIV and AIDS Prevention", soon to become the biggest Olympic-related publication in the organization's history.

- **MDG No. 7: Ensure environmental sustainability** – The IOC takes great pride in its environmental policies. It has a dedicated Sport and Environment Commission which works with UN agencies, not only to ensure environmental sustainability during the Olympic games but also to educate young people around the world on the importance of environmental care. The IOC's policy on the environment is linked directly to Olympic Games legacy programmes, in which host countries are required to demonstrate that environmental programmes are not designed to last only for the duration of the games. The IOC applies resources to educational programmes for young people around the world. Such programmes are also linked to economic sustainability and therefore contribute immensely to improving the quality of life. The IOC also collaborates with governments and specialist organizations.

- **MDG No. 8: Develop a global partnership for development** – The success of the Olympic Movement's activities that leverage the popularity, discipline and immense organizational power and capacity of sport to serve society is dependent on the partnership it has developed primarily with the UN and UN agencies, governments of the world, the vast sporting community and its organization around the globe, specialist organizations and the public. This partnership continues to be developed and strengthened. The IOC understands the influence of sport on young people, and it will continue to open doors to its partners to deliver educational and development programmes to those who need it, while at the same time providing some of the resources itself.

12. Conclusion

At the World Summit held in New York, Heads of State and Governments of Member Nations formally recognized sport as an important tool for development and peace and included the following in their resolutions:

> **We underline that sports can foster peace and development and can contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding, and we encourage discussions in the General Assembly for proposals leading to a plan of action on sport and development.**

The Secretary-General's follow-up reports to the General Assembly "Sport for development and peace: progress and prospects" (A/62/325 and Corr.1), in which he outlined measures undertaken during the first years of the three-year Action Plan defined in his prior report entitled "Sport for development and peace: the way forward" (A/61/373), have more than justified the important role that sport can play and is playing in the development of society and in supporting the achievement of the MDGs. His report to the 63rd Session "Sport for development and peace: building on the foundations, alludes to the cooperation between the

IOC and United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies during the Olympic games in Beijing.

It is the intention of the IOC to maintain that momentum and support the UN in pursuing its mandate.

The IOC intends to increase its communication and collaborative actions with the United Nations.

Annex II

Draft resolution

Observer status for the International Olympic Committee in the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the Olympic International Committee,

1. *Decides* to invite the Olympic International Committee to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the present resolution.